A Brief History of Union Church

Prepared and Read by R. A. Lakur at the Gentennial Celebration May 29, 1910.

One hundred years ago, tradition tells us a little company of devout men and women were wont to gather in the grove on the rocks near the old Fulkerson spring, some four hundred yards from where

we gather to-day.

"The groves were God's first temples.

Ere man had learned to hew the shaft.

And lay the architrave, and spread the roof above them

Ere he framed the lofty vault to gather and roll back the sound of

In the darkling wood, amidst the cool and silence he knelt down, and offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks and supplication

Fit shrine for humble worshipper to hold communion with his Maker." Looking back through one hundred years of tempest and sunshine we see that old picture. For their names we must wait till we are permitted to read them from the Lambs' Book of Life, yet we know them for their works do follow them. They are gathered for miles around. They are hungry for the Bread of Life. Some of them are members of old Salem church. Their pastor Daniel Brown. Edmund Bearden or some of these old worthes sent of God to proclaim the king-dom of Heaven at hand, has preached in their homes. His fame has spread abroad among the settiers till no house will hold the multitude, hungry for the costed. They be take themselves to these inviting shades.

hungry for the costel. They be take themselves to these inviting shades, for there is much water here. Ideal Baptist soil. No wonder it grew. A protracted meeting is held and there went out to hear him all the region round about. Many of them believed, and he baptized them into the fellowship of old Salem church. These were the beginnings of Union church. The probabilities are that it continued as an arm of Salem church till 1820. The records of Salem church show that in May 1820 Eld. Wilham Buckley petitioned for a constitution for the brothren in his neighborhood. It was unanimously agreed that they be constituted Saturday before the first Sunday in June 1820. Bros. Willis Champion Sr., Dempsey Burgess, Champion Terry, Robert Hodge, Lewis Barlow, John Alsobrook and William Gray were appointed as "helps" to meet at Frederick Fulkerson's house. Henry trodge, Sr., and Sally his wife, Frederick Fulkerson's house, Haynes, Anna Brent, Abel Teague and Patsy his wife are given as those from Salem church going into the new constitution. On inquiry we find that William Buckley lived on the place now owned by W. H. LaRue and Frederick Fulkerson on the place now owned by W. L. LaRue and Frederick Fulkerson on the place now owned by W. L. Taylor. Salem church records show that they frequently met at Frederick Fulkerson house. In June 1806 they appointed the Lord's Supper to be observed there in August beginning Friday before as a solemn fast day. The church agrees to meet at Bro. Sellers the second Sunday and Saturday before in each month, as "monthly," meeting, and at Bro. Fulkersons, the Fourth Sunday and Saturday before as their "branch" church meeting. This arrangement continued through 1807. In July 1812 the church again meets at Bro. Fulkersons and he is restored, having been excluded some time before on the sons and he is restored, having been excluded some time before on the charge of "usurping authority, wilful falsehood and stubborn obstinacy. Sallie Hodge was received by experience and baptism at that meeting. A council of sister churches meet at Bro. Fulkersons in 1810 to act upon his case. Salem meets again at Bro. Fulkersons in January 1816 and in February 1818. Doubtless there were other meetings of which there is no mention in the minutes. We find from Spencers History of Kentucky Baptists that Union church joined Little River Association of United Baptists in 1820. Perhaps here in 18 the reason it was called "Union" church, United Baptists, or Missionary as distinguished from the Hardshell, or Anti-Vissionary Bapsionary as distinguished from the Hardshell, or Anti-Missionary Baptist. They were brave only three years old, yet they entertain the Little River Association 1823. May 1826 Union church petitioned Sa-lem church for Bro. and sister Swan to be their deacons. In answer Salem says:- We think the request reasonable and leave it entirely with Bro. and sister Swan.

with Bro. and sister Swan.

In August 1826 Union church petitions Salem for "helps" and Salem appoints Willis Champion, Sr. Geo. Swan and Martin F. Martin to assist them in their counsel. Salem church petitions Union church to join them in a Union Meeting in October 1826. In 1826 Union church petitions Salem church for a deacon to officiate the Lord's Supper. In 1833 Union church asked Salem for "help" to consider a brother that wishes to withdraw from the church and join the anti-mission party that went off from Little River Association. From these references we see how closely allied these two bodies were from 1805 to 1835, the first thirty years of their history.

A GLIMPSE AT CONDITIONS IN 1810

When Union church was beginning there was but one other church in all this county that was Salem, the mother church. There were no railroads, steam-boat or steam mills then, for steam had not yet been harnessed. The settlements were few and far between. Wild beasts and Indians prowled the forests and and far between. Wild beasts and Indians prowled the forests and endangered the settlers. Wagons buggies and farm machinery had not yet been introduced. The flat boat, the horse-mill, the ox-cart, the tan-yard, and the rip-saw were the great inventions of that conquering civilization. Public free schools, mail routes. Post offices, and Newspapers were far away juxries of which the wondorous wise told around the cabin fire-side. The astonished listeners wondered: "How can these things be?"

CHARACTERISTICS OF THESE PIONEERS OF FAITH

Many of them were from the older states, the Carolinas and Virginians. They were seeking a land and soil where they might build homes and chatches. They brought with them the Bible, Faith, Hope and Love. They built homes with children in them and charches with Christ in them. Their full was not without works. They were farmers Lands must be cleared, improvements built, crops planted and tilled, yet they found time and place to worship God and build his house. Many of them made long journeys on foot, horse-back, or ox-wagons to attend their church meetings. They were glad when they said: "Let us go up to the house of the Lord." They made no excuse. Here was their chief boy. They loved their church and gave it their tolls, their cares. Their loyalty is witnessed in their attendance upon its meetings and in enforcing its discipline. The members are promptly cited to the church for non-attendance, going to the racing fields, allowing fielding and darwing in the home, and other seeming minor offenses of to-day. 'Call for the peace of the church at every meeting was one of their rules.

John Terry appears as the clerk and pillar of the church in these early times. Tradition relates that all abundoned and gave up the singless when every headens.

sinking ship except this faithful servant of God. For years he alone came to the sacred altar, read a chapter from the Book then with mighty faith supplicated the throne of graces, sang some of the old songs of Zion, and in the strength of that heavenly manna, he came. through the wilderness, across the Jordan into the promised land Soon a man sent from God comes and holds a meeting of days, Zion pravails and brings forth sons and daughters. A tree planted by the rivers of water, that brought forth his fruit in his season.

EVENTS FROM 1835 TO 1910

Our records begin with March 1835. The records before that date are said to have been burned with the residence of Peyton Hodge, the clerk of the church. Only five of the Constituent members names appear on our records in 1832 viz. Sally Haynes. Sally Hodge, Abel Teague, Patsy Teague and William Buckley, William Buckley probably the first pastor, as he appears to have been the "mover" in orably the list pastor, as he appears to have been the "mover" in organization. He was born in Wordford county Tennessee. Ordained to preach in 1807. About 1820 he moved to this place and united with this church. After a few years he moved to Caldwell county. He was regarded as one of the most able and effective preachers of his time. It is said he baptized 135 persons in one church during 1818-19. He was greatly esteemed in Little River Association as appears from his being Moderator from 1821 to 1828, and again in 1833 when the split came. His closing days however were clouded. He goes with the Anti-Missionaries, and was finally silenced from preaching on account of drunkeness. (He was great grand father of the writer of

The next pastor was probably Abel Teague as he appears as still a member of the church and occasional Moderator until 1837. He preached the Introductory sermon before Little River Association in 1836.

Eld. Willis Champion appears as the next pastor. The May Minutes 1836 says: A discourse was delivered by Bro. Willis Champion. We appoint our communion season quarterly, April, June. August and October. In June 1835 a Brother is excluded for intoxication. On motion we take into consideration the propriety of building a new meeting house. Bros., Belus Boaz, Peyton Hodge and Samuel Wilson.

meeting nouse. Bros., Belus Boaz, Peyton Hodge and Samuel Wilborn are appointed a committee. and they draw subscriptions and procure subscribers, and so soon as a sufficent amount can be raised, they proceed forthwith to employ some one to the building of said house, as has been described by the church. Evidently that was the second house that stood in what is now the cemetery west of the one we are in to-day. It was not completed however till 1837.

The September meeting of 1835 took up the resolution that ways proposed by the Association, that the churches contribute for itinerant preaching. Seven dollars and twenty-five cents were given. Motion that Brother Graces' liberty to preach be extended to the ends of the earth. The July meeting 1836 petitions Bro. Grace to take the pastoral care of the church. He served till February 1837 when the church appointed Bro. Robt. Hodge and Belus Boaz to look around and know if there can be one obtained. They report in April that they can obtain Jas. W. Mansfield if they will change time of meeting. He serves them from 1837 to 1841. This appears as a period of great prosperity in the church. Their new house is finished and the old one torn down, Additions are noted by baptism or letter almost every meeting. The church refuses to help itinerary preaching as requested by the Association. In October 1839

Ramer to exercise his gifts in the bounds of this and adjoining churches if invited. On request of the Association they say: We think it not expedient at this time to join the General Association. Dec. 30, 1837 is appointed a day of prayer, thanksgiving and praise. The Association meets with them again in 1841. Of their pastor, Jas. W. Mansfield, Spencers History says: He was the pastor of New Bethel church twenty-five years. When Little River Association divided in 1833 most of the older ministers went with the Anti-Mission party. This left the churches in great destitution. To remedy this evil, Mr. Mansfield regularly supplied several churches with monthly preaching on week days, till the Lord raised up young preachers to take charge of them. His gifts were practical rather than brilliant. He was devoutly consecrated to his holy calling. He received small compensation yet earnestly advocated Missions, education and temperance reform. He was greatly successful in winning souls to Christ.

In December 1841 a committee of Union church met at Mt. Pleasant near Berry Ferry and received fourteen members. In April 1842 Ramer to exercise his gifts in the bounds of this and adjoining church

ant near Berry Ferry and received fourteen members. In April 1842 these with others are given letters of dismission to constitute a church. Joel E. Grace, Colin Hodge, John Boaz, William Terry, John Terry and Peyton Hodge are appointed as helps in that organization. Jan. 1842, Eid. Joel E. Grace is called to the pastoral care of the church. March 1842, a committee is appointed to examine the treasurer office, sixteen cents is reported on hand. The same meeting liberated Colin Hodge to exercise his gifts in the bounds of this church and if requested in Crittenden, Livingston and Caldwell counties. He preached his first sermon in Union church May 1842 and his widow, who is with us to-day, tells us he was arranging to commemorate his fiftieth anniversaryin the ministry by preaching here from the same text May 1892.

In July sister Elizabeth Hodge presents a bathing wrapper to the church and at her death wills the church twenty-five dollars. This is

the mother of Eld. Colin Hodge, Soon after this the church presents Bro. Grace the pastor a baotismal suit of clothes. Thirteen join the church as result of meeting of days. These were perhaps among the most prosperous days of the church. Now has a membership of 122, 87 whites and 35 blacks, and Mt. Pleasant has been constituted from

Eld. Joel E. Grace is the great "Commoner" of these days. He was bern in North Carolina in 1801, moved to Kentucky while young, joined Union church when about thirty, paptized by Jas. W. Mansfield, who has just possed off the stage. He scon begins to hold prayer meetings, exhorting thristians to faithfulness and sinners to repentance. He was soon illegated and ordained, and served faithfulness. ly and successfully in his holy calling about thirty years. A contemporary says: "His pleasant and one manner of address made him a very pleasant speaker. There were not few men of this association, if any, who had more correct views of the doctrines of the bible, who were more useful in the churches, and more beloved by all who knew

February 1844 the church unanimously agreed to the ordination of Colin Hodge and appointed Saturday before the third Sunday in May for him to be ordained, the meeting to commence on Friday before the Counsil consisting of Elders James Mansfield, Clayborn Wilson and Willis Champion. January 1854, just as the meeting was dismissed, Brethren Colin Hodge and J. Millet came and proposed preaching in the evening. The meeting continued nine days. Bro, Grace the pastor came and a door was opened to receive members. Nine were heavilized.

September 1846, met and adjourned from day to day through its protracted meeting, assisted by Elders Coluns, Hodge and Champion. Fifteen were admitted to the church. We have two sisters only remaining with us to tell of the great revivals of 1845-46. The following December Elder Grace resigned, after five years of faithful effective work, in which the church flourished as a tree planted by the rivers of waters, bringing forth fruit in her season.

March 1847, Elder Colin Hodge met with the church and accepted the pastoral care for one year. July 1847, the church requested the the pastor to deliver a discourse on Missionary Benevolence, the association having called the attention of the churches to the religious state of the country. Up to this time very little attention had been given to mission work abroad—indeed they felt there was plenty in their own bounds.

About this time a great trouble arose in the church, continuing some two years. Twenty-four are dismissed by letter and exclusion. They now number only 88.

March 1848, the church again calls Elder Joel E. Grace, and he accepts. In July in response to the request of the Association they say;—We have no objection to constituting a Minister and Members, but rather recommend such a measure to the Association. In October

1839, the church enjoyed a gracious revival. Fifteen additions. Through 1850 and 57 we note additions almost every meeting. August 1857 the letter to the Association is read and received. \$9.30 is sent to Home Missions, the first noted in the history of the church. They contribute regularly after this.

September 1857, the church passed the following resolution:—
Whereas Dr. Stephens has delivered two discourses at Providence on

Baptism in which he has advanced doctrine and made assertions as we believe contrary to the Bible, Therefore Resolved, that we request Elder Colin Hodge to present the truth according to the Bible, in that neighborhood, either by public discourse or debate with Dr. Stephens, whichever he may think best calculated to advance the cause of truth.

December 1352, the meeting of days was attended by the pastor and Bro. Green and a part of the time by Bro. Hodge, during which the work was mightily revived. Seventeen were added to the church followed by others through the year. Again in 1853 they had a great revival and fourteen were added. 1863-4-5 are prosperous years. Peace prevails and the Lord is adding continually those being saved. October 1856, a presbytery consisting of Elders Grace and Hodge ordain William Threlkeld and B. W. Barnes as deacons and Milton L. Bourland to the Gospel Ministry.

January 1857, the rule:-Call for the peace of the church was stricken off. The Union meeting was held with Union church fifth Sunday in May 1857. These meetings were quarterly, and occasions Sunday in May 1857. These meetings were quarterly, and occasions of rounion of brethren from sister churches. Two or three days were spent in preaching, prayer exhertation and singing. They were seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

February 1800, Ebler Joel E. Grace resigns and calls for letter for himself and wife, having served as pastor two terms, seventeen years in all. He is succeeded by Ehler Colin Hodge who accepted on contions that the church hold (1) a stated prayer meeting, (2) discard protracted meetings as usually conducted and (3) a stated salary. It was a prosperous year. There were twenty-five additions and eleven

March 1961, Elter Willis Champion was called as pastor and Bro. Hodge and daughter were granted letters. Bro. Champion continues with them through the war until June 1868, when Elder Isaac Mc-Murrry is called. This war period however is one of the most prosperous in the history of the church. About fifty were baptized. Barnes was liberated to exercise his ministeral gifts and ordained October 1864, Elders Champion and Deboe as presbytery The pastors salary is increased from tifty to eighty dollars per year.

March 1866, a committee is appointed to raise funds for building a new house of worship. June 1866 Elder Isaac McMurry accepts the pastoral care of the church. The building committee are auhorized to go forward and make contracts for the building. J. A. Daivdson, D. W. Carter, Sr., E, H. Taylor, W. H. Franklin and W. J. LaRue are the committee. September 1870, the church resolves to build a brick house fifty feet long, thirty-eight feet wide and fourteen fee between floor and ceiling. We are in that house today, having spen some eight hundred dollars in repairs and improvements recently. some eight hundred dollars in repairs and improvements recently.

The building did not absorb all their attention however, for we find the church enjoying gracious revivals and in gatherings during the five or six years of the building. Elder Isaac McMurry was the faithful pastor during this building period. He was greatly esteemed for

his piety and upright living.

January 1874, Elder Colin Hodge again becomes the undershepard

A burdensome debt is hanging over them. Who has not heard of the drouth of 74? \$573 yet to be raised and a crop failure! Yet we read October 1874 the meeting continued twelve days, when twenty-four put on Christ in baptism, among whom was T, C. Carter, our pastor

Of the pastor Colin Hodge I hesitate to write. Such sacred memories! Such holy ground! Many of us today hear his voice, feel his presence, see his tears, know his love. Though departed yet speaking I have heard the great and near great of our day and times, but for pulpit eloquence and power, none have impressed me as did Colin Hodge, the preacher of my childhood days. His biography says:—He was converted in his 25th year. In 1841, on his way to a horse race he met the people returning from Union church where they have just closed, a meeting and this thought occurred to him, "As we are going now, so will it be in the end." He became pungently convicted of his sins, and witndrawing a bet he had made on a horse race, turned his attention to the affairs of his soul. This alone is rich reward for all those years of toils and prayers. Perhaps those fathers were discouraged and thought their meeting a failure. Only three or four joined that year. But their going home that day was used of the Lord to arrest this young man yet breathing out threatening against the disciples of this young man yet breathing out threatening against the disciples of the Lord. And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received sight, and arose and was baptized, by Elder Jas. W. Mansfield into the fellowship of Union church, a chosen vessel to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ to the multitudes that gladly

Bro. Hodge continues pastor until February 1883, when the church reluctantly accepts his resignation, offered on account of his failing health. The records show this one of the brightest eras in the history of the church. Many revivals and ingatherings are noted. Its membership is now more than 200, having almost doubled in ten years.

Closely identified with this great work and a great factor in it was Elder B. W. Barnes of blessed memory. While he was never pastor of the church, he was truly the pastors helper and true yoke-fellow in all the work of the church. He was most effective in revival work, a winner of souls. His carrest entreaty his faithful warning weening.

winner of souls. His earnest entreaty, his faithful warning, weeping, sowing precious seed, brought forth abundant harvest of precious

souls. The same meeting which accepted the resignation of Colin Hodge,

called for the ordination of Bro. T. C. Carter. In May 1883 he was ordained, the presbytery consisting of Elders Hodge, Gibbs, Henry, Blackburn, Traylor and Ogleby. The same month at a call meeting he was called to take pastoral care of the church. The church greatly prospered. Mission work advances. Bro. Sidney A. Childress is a Licentiate. He and the pastor hold successful revivals not only in the church, but at Columbia Mines and Childress school house.

The church joins the Ohio River Association. Bro. Carter resigns December 1886, having served three years. The next meeting Elder Colin Hodge is again called and accepts. Sidney A. Childress is ordained, the presbytery consisting of Elders Hodge Henry and Carter.

January 1888 the church called Elder J. S. Henry. In April Bro. Henry accepts and continues with the church as pastor three years. The church moves grandly on in its missions of blessing the world under his leading hand. Missions and benevolences are coming more and more a feature in the work of the church.

May 1891 the church is requested by Cave Spring church to ordain

May 1891 the church is requested by Cave Spring church to ordain Bro. E. M. Eaton to the full work of the ministry. The request was cheerfully granted the presbytery consisting of Elder Carter, Gibbs,

Franks and Henry.

December 1891 Bro. Henry resigns and Elder E. B. Blackburn is called and accepts the care of the church and continues four years. Bro. G. S. Summers is ordained December 1894.

January 1896 the church receives a request from Cave Spring church for the ordination of R. A. LaRue. The request is granted.

March 1896 Elder J. S. Henry again accepts the care of the church and continues until December 1904 when Elder T. A. Conway was called. Bro. Conway accepted as supply until May 1906, when Elder W. R. Gibbs was called and continued with the church until December 1908 when Elder T. C. Carter was again called and continues with us

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